

The Free Press' Short Story

HILL MOTHER

BY HARRY HARRISON KROLL

A HILL woman, a hide in her arms and two small ones trailing, stopped at the sound of Caleb Morehead's car and looked back. Caleb saw her lumpy waist, and slowed, not thinking that Patricia Cunningham, sitting beside him, might be annoyed. When he stopped, he reached back and opened the rear door.

"Life?" he asked, smiling at cheerful invitation.

He felt, then, the odd shudder which moved through Patricia's slim body. The hill woman and her children all understood to climb through the door at once; then managed to get in one at a time with some panting and word of apology.

Caleb drove on, curiously shocked by Patricia's reaction; yet he understood why she should feel so, for the woman was ugly and old, and the children none too clean; and surely the May-morning was transparent and beautiful, the winding road appealing quiet and they enjoyed each other so greatly.

Still, Caleb Morehead had a profound pity and sympathy for these old, tired mountain mothers. He looked at Patricia from the corner of his eye; she stared straight ahead, her annoyance slow to subside. She was beautiful, Caleb thought. Her hair was golden, shining in the depths to leaf-brown, and sunny at the fringes.

Her face was oval, and her dark eyes intelligent. Already, early in the season as it was, she was becoming tanned with the sunny life at Monteville, on Cumberland Mountain.

"I'll get out that," the woman said, two miles onward. Caleb stopped. The string of passengers climbed out, the baby crying because the ride had ended. The car left them at the roadside, veiled in a fog of dust.

"I am sorry," the man said, breaking the long silence. "I didn't think."

"It is all right," spoke up Patricia. "People of that sort just feel me with a sort of horror. Old, tired mothers! But there is nothing one can do."

They had spoken of many things while Caleb was working on his Mother's Day sermon, but none of their previous conversations had brought out this side of Patricia's nature. He was silent.

She cast quick eyes up and watched his face. He was busy coming into the highway from the sleepy side-road. In the tenseness of the situation, they felt each other's disapproval, and because it was the first time they'd known, they were quickly hurt and troubled. Caleb drove swiftly the rest of the distance and entered the cloistered mountain resort village near Patricia's gate, letting her out.

"I'll be seeing you," she called.

"Yes," he said.

"Let me know when you're ready for the music program rehearsal."

Yes, thanks. He drove on three blocks to the church, a lovely English building of Hoedling Green rock, and there he turned into the parking space. He put out a long leg, dangling it in the decision. He was a lean young man, with spare, strong face, and a lingering gauntness as if his childhood had been none too well fed. His manner was careful and restrained, his clothes excellently tailored, and one seeing him must have been impressed by his total air of Christian gentlemanliness.

There was a haunting quietness here at the church, with its cathedral-like beauty and lingering peace. He was pastor here, and thought Caleb loved it, and cherished it, and he also feared it in much the same way he feared Patricia Cunningham.

His congregations, in summer, were fashionable and above the average in intelligence and culture. They came from Nashville, Murfreesboro, Columbia, and other fine old cultural centers. In sermons they demanded the best. So far in his pastorate he had pleased them. He was aware that often his pastoral thought, purity of method, and scholarly manner were commented upon with appreciation.

But he had been born and reared in the remote hills, seventy-five miles back in the dark caves and grim crags of the Cumberland. Until lately there was hardly a road out of that forlorn region. He could remember the gaunt hungry boy that once was himself, going along the sun-golden cove, barefoot, eager-eyed, seeing that in the summits and distances and clouds. For five years he had attended the seminary, guarding his speech, disciplining his idiom, until the last raspy overtone of the hills had left his mellow voice. None of the fashionable folk had been informed of his origin.

He got out of the car and entered the study, where stained light came down on his littered desk. Here lay his sermon for Sunday. He sat, and

roughened her, but I want you to meet her. She lives only seventy-five miles from here. Shall we drive down this afternoon?"

"If you wish it."

The seventy-five miles melted into the late afternoon. There was a wild grandeur about the country through which they drove. The car turned from the highway into a stone-girt side lane and finally stopped at a log dwelling.

Here the drowsy hush was broken only by the hum of bees in the fruit trees, the remote tinkle of cowbells, and the occasional whistle of a bird. Mrs. Morehead saw them drive up and came to meet them.

Patricia dropped back a pace when she saw the tall, gaunt woman, one of whose hands was not a hand at all, but a nub.

"Mother! I wanted you to know each other."

"I am delighted, Mrs. Morehead," Patricia carried it off, upset and horrified though she may have been. This haggard, discouraged woman, Caleb Morehead's mother, he who was so polished, so fine! It was incredible.

Caleb then set himself to being as natural as if his mother were cultured and polished like himself. The three of them went over the old house, looking at the antique furniture, studying the care and workmanship of all the woodwork of the interior. Afterward they went into the open, where flowers and distances melted into a purple and gold cosmos. Now and again Mary Morehead spoke in her mountain dialect. Often it was sound without meaning to Patricia, but Caleb understood and translated it for her. The sun was declining, ready to drop behind a dark mountain, when the bells seemed to come nearer, and Caleb said:

"Mother, we are going to drive up the cows."

She nodded, and Caleb and Patricia went along the path toward the pasture bars. It was twilight here, though on Tother Mountain the sunlight bronzed the summits. At the gate, while the loitering cows cropped grass, Caleb looked at Patricia, and said:

"That is my mother. In the old years, we lived here in poverty. My father was a hill preacher who died when I was young, and Mother worked hard and long to keep her family together. God bless her. One night in the fall of the year we had all stopped at David Morehead's, down the valley, on the way home from selling some of the crops at Mountain City. Away in the night the house where we stayed caught fire. I had been put in the roof-room to sleep, and cause all the beds elsewhere were filled with the wild confusion of dragging furniture, and fighting to keep the wind from carrying the flames to the near-by barns and stables, they forgot me. And there I was, alone, up there in that attic room, the lower part of the house filled with flames. I remember how it was when I awoke! Flames creeping through the cedar floor cracks, the smoke suffocating. There were no windows. I began to scream, no one could hear in the roar. Well, he laughed briefly, "I am still here, and Mother is like that."

"She saved you?"

"She saved me," he said simply.

"I see," said Patricia briefly, and when she looked at him her eyes were tear-filled. "Is that what happened to her hand?"

"Yes." To hide his own feelings, Caleb bent and let down the bars. The cows came through, and shambled lazily toward the log house. Patricia and Caleb caught hands and followed slowly.

"That is why," he explained, "I never see a mother, any mother, but what I have a great moving for her. To me, there is no force, no thing, like motherhood. That is why I have spent so much time and thought and energy on our Mother's Day service. It is such a poor tribute that I can make to my mother, and all motherhood!"

In the pastor's study next morning, Caleb looked down upon his desk at the two sermons. Slowly he picked one up and tore it into pieces, tossed it into the wastebasket, then scanned the simple prose of the paper he had preserved. Its message was no more pretentious than the story he had told Patricia on the visit back into the hills. It was a gaunt tale of his mother and her splendor of character. He asked only that God should give him courage and strength to be worthy of his mother. That, no more.

He was still there, standing in an attitude of prayer, when he heard the great organ reverberate. He went quickly into the high, hushed room. Patricia was alone, for it was not yet time for the service. Their eyes met.

As he placed the sermon on the altar, she came to him and read the first few lines.

"While you are searching for the ancient high simplicities," she said, "will you some time count me in with you?"

"I have," he told her gravely, "been counting you in a long, long while if you wish to be counted."

She smiled and went to the organ. In a little while the church filled, the bishop and his family came, and Caleb delivered his sermon, convincingly, inspiring. It was a moving thing that held the audience. When the service ended people came to him, mutely clasped his hand and went quietly out.

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**WAR**  
**25 Years Ago**

**Sir Julian Byng Took Over Canadian Corps—Russians Tried To Join British In Middle East**

BY H. H. GORDON  
Canadian Press Staff Writer

The heroic fighting by the 2nd Division around the mine craters of St. Etienne was followed by a period of comparative inactivity for the Canadian Corps in France during May 1916. The ground, won by the Germans at heavy cost, proved useless to them and the trend of battle veered north where the Battle of Saenastun Wood was fought only in June.

On May 9, 1916 an announcement was made of the appointment of Maj. Gen. Sir Julian Byng to command the Canadian Corps and the popular soldier, who later became Governor-General of Canada, took over the post later in the month. He succeeded Maj. Gen. E. A. H. Alderson who returned to a home command in England.

Only a few months before, Sir Julian had returned from Gallipoli where his own promotion for meritorious service. He was recognized as a master tactician and during the year he commanded the Canadians he won their unswerving loyalty and admiration. Under Byng the Canadians triumphed at Vimy Ridge in 1917 and as a direct result of this engagement was promoted to command the Third Army.

Elsewhere on the Western Front the French defenders of Verdun were locked in battle with the German Crown Prince's army.

**Russians In Persia**

Great interest was taken at this time in the efforts of a Russian force driving through Persia to bring about a junction with British forces attempting to reach Baghdad by way of the Mesopotamian desert.

The Russians under General Buraev had been conducting a campaign in northern Persia to counteract the effects of German propaganda there. They occupied Hamadan and Kermandshah and finally reached Mesopotamia in May 1916. But the campaign failed when strong Turkish reinforcements caused the little force to withdraw hurriedly to the north.

When Sir Stanley Maude's army finally took Baghdad in the spring of 1917 the Russian soldiers in the Caucasus and northern Persia were demoralized as a result of the Czar's abdication and the growth of revolutionary sentiment in Russia.

**Scotland Wants Canada's Flour**

Trade Commissioner Discusses Relative Prices Ontario and Manitoba Brands

Glasgow, (CP) A considerable business in Ontario winter wheat flour has developed in Scotland and there would be a demand for additional quantities if the price were not out of line," says G. B. Johnson, Canadian Canadian trade commissioner.

Johnson reported a late quotation for Ontario flour was 27c, 6 d. (\$6.10) compared with 25c. (\$5.55) for spring wheat flour from Manitoba.

"It is not likely that a premium on Ontario winters will be readily obtainable, quotations being, in fact, normally 2c, 6. (about 54 cents) less than for Manitobans," he said.

"One of the most important firms in this trade states that Scotland could easily take four or five times the quantity now being shipped, but at such a premium spring wheat flour may largely be made to fill the bill."

He quoted this firm as criticizing Ontario millers for not taking up the export of winter wheat flour more seriously "as it might easily be made a permanent asset in the Canadian trade."

"There will be no reduction in the use of Canadian spring wheats so far as Scotland is concerned," Johnson said, "so long as the wheat is graded up to the present high standard."

**Zoo Birds Calm In Air Bombing**

But Animals Go Panicky and Some of Them Die from Shock

LONDON, (CP) Although animals are inclined to panic when bombs drop, Zoological Society officials have discovered birds seem quite unconcerned.

In one instance when a bomb dropped in the Zoo an antelope panicked and died from shock and a zebra broke loose. A few other animals died from shock. But when a bomb captured the ravens' cage they merely flew to the trees and cawed a few nasty names at a certain man.

An official recalled that in the last war swallows brought up their young just outside a gun emplacement, with the guns going continuously.

**Mother's Role Hard Nowadays**

Much different Now From 60 Years Ago Says Actress with Four Sons

NEW YORK, (CP) Being a mother is not all "beer and skittles," in spite of Mother's Day coming on May 11 this year.

Miss Dorothy Stickney, Mrs. Howard Lambay's mother in the hit play, "Life with Father," says it keeps her jumping to be a success with her four sons (two are off and off the stage).

"The on-stage atmosphere of reverence for mother, doesn't last off-stage at all. Off-stage those youngsters expect a lot of me. Maybe if I had children of my own I would do better."

"You need to be a psychologist to explain things to them. In 'Life with Father' says, mothers weren't often troubled with such problems as divorce, for instance.

"Life then was secure; motherhood was sacred. In 1880 if you had a child you were Somebody's Mother, and that was that. You automatically took your place on a pedestal and were entitled to love, affection, support and reverence.

"But motherhood, now is a job of work. To succeed at it, you have to be a nurse, a dietitian, a teacher, an interior decorator, a psychologist, and a mighty good sport besides.

"After you've done your best, your children judge you coldly. They may or may not give you a passing mark in motherhood."

**ALIENS FOR BRITAIN**

LONDON, (CP) More than 550 "enemy aliens" interned in Canada at the outbreak of war have returned to Britain to be freed for war work and other occupations in the discretion of authorities.



Every duty, well and honestly done, is a contribution to victory.  
THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA.

**MANY A "JOHN DOE" IN TELEPHONE WORK**

A subscriber writes:  
"The other day I read that John Doe had completed 30 years with your company."  
"John got where he is by intelligence and industry. But your company got John where he is because it also was intelligent enough first to choose, then to promote him."  
"To me John Doe is the telephone company."

We are quite content that this company should be judged by the people who work for it. Their skill, courtesy and devotion to service, account, in large measure, for the progress of the telephone.

*On Active Service*  
*Doing Things & Words*

**Van Camp's Choice Quality TOMATOES**

**Kellogg's CORN FLAKES**  
3 8-oz. pkgs. 23c

**Maxwell House COFFEE** Drip or Regular 1-lb. tin 49c

Neutle's Evaporated Milk tin 4c, 8c  
Aylmer Ci Apple Jelly 12-oz. glass 15c  
Golden-Hollow Dates 2 lbs. 25c  
McLaren's Quick Pudding 3 pkgs. 25c

Groves' Pure MAPLE SYRUP 16-oz. bit. 23c

Cowan's Perfection Cocoa tin 14c, 24c  
Raven English Toffee lb. 29c  
Easifirst Shortening or Domestic 2 lbs. 27c  
McLaren's Powdered Jellies 2 pkgs. 11c

McCormick's Butter Bars lb. 16c  
Chocolate Mallow Biscuits lb. 19c  
Christie's Pineapple Madeira Cake each 15c  
Christie's Raisin Cup Cakes 6 for 10c

Maple Leaf SOAP FLAKES with 2 cakes Toilet Soap All for 20c

**H.O. Powdered AMMONIA** 3 pkgs. 13c

2 in 1 Paste-SHOE POLISH tin 9c  
Pearl Naphtha SOAP 5 bars 19c  
Hawes' FLOOR WAX tin 23c, 43c

**LIPTON'S FULL-FLAVOURED TEA**  
Sunlight SOAP Bar 5c  
Kirk's Castile SOAP 3 cakes 14c  
Gold Laundry SOAP 5 bars 19c

SPECIAL JUICY VALENCIA ORANGES, Doz. 25c  
FRESH CARROTS 2 Large Bunches 15c  
CRISP GREEN CABBAGE, Pound 7c  
FIRM, RIPE CUBAN PINEAPPLE, Large Size, Each 19c

Also, Fresh Spinach, Green Onions, Asparagus  
Fruit and Vegetable Prices Until Saturday Night Only

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